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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1380th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 24 May 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. ALARCON de QUESADA (Cuba)
(Vice-Chairman)

- Tribute to the memory of the former Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi
- Report of the Working Group
- Requests for hearing
- Cooperation with intergovernmental bodies

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Alarcon de Quesada (Cuba), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA, MR. RAJIV GANDHI

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): It is my sad duty to express our sympathy and condolences on the loss of one of the most important leaders in India and, through you, Mr. Chairman, I would like to express our sympathy to the Mission, Government and people of India for this untimely tragedy.

Mr. VYAS (India): I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Ambassador of Papua New Guinea, Chairman of the Working Group, for his statement of sympathy and condolence on the tragic event that has taken place in our country. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was a statesman of very high status. His commitment to the United Nations and to the cause of decolonization was total. The independence of Namibia was a primary concern of his for which he worked unceasingly in the United Nations, in the Non-Aligned Movement and in other multilateral forums. His death has left a big void in India.

Once again, I thank the Committee for the condolences expressed.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): Ambassador Lohia's comments certainly reflected a universal feeling. I am certain that all members of the Committee - indeed of the Organization - felt deeply the tragic passing of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, an eminent personality not only of India but of the world at large, associated in particular with the ideals of the United Nations.

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): As members will surely all recall, at its 1379th meeting on 23 April, the Special Committee established an open-ended Working Group to consider the remarks, suggestions and proposals made on the rationalization of the Committee's work with a view to improving its efficiency and to submit its recommendations to the Committee. It is a pleasure for me to invite Mr. Lohia, the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea, who has been Chairman of that Working Group, to introduce the result of the work of the Working Group as reflected in document A/AC.109/L.1756. I now call on Mr. Lohia.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this meeting in order to conclude our consideration of this particularly important question so that the Subcommittees assigned by this Committee to carry out various tasks can proceed with their work.

It is with great pleasure that I take the floor today to introduce to the Special Committee, through you, the report of the open-ended Working Group established to review the Committee's approach and method of work. We all remember indeed that it was at your wise initiative that this important review process started.

The Working Group began its deliberations on 29 April 1991, and held no less than nine meetings, during which all the items on its agenda were discussed extensively, including the proposed merger of the two subcommittees, the streamlining and consolidation of the Special Committee's resolutions, the language of those resolutions and in particular the question of whether the Committee should continue to make reference to apartheid.

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

It is the result of those discussions, in which participated almost the entire membership of the Committee, as well as non-members, representatives of administering Powers, a representative of the United States Virgin Islands and the representatives of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the Pan African Congress of Azania (PAC), that I have the honour to introduce today, in the hope that it will be endorsed by the Committee.

The report contains five recommendations. The first, recommendation A, proposes that the current two Subcommittees be merged effective 1 January 1992. The second, recommendation B, opts for the streamlining and consolidation of the resolutions on the Territories on the agenda of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, while making provision for a short resolution on each individual Territory.

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

The third, recommendation C, concludes, on the basis of the views expressed by the overwhelming majority of the participants, including the representatives of the ANC and the PAC, that apartheid should continue to be considered under the relevant resolutions of the Committee and that the language to be used in this connection should be dictated by prevailing circumstances.

The fourth, recommendation D, concerns the language used in the Committee's resolutions, particularly the related question of "name-calling", and proposes that this issue should be further considered in the substantive deliberations on the resolutions and decisions of the Special Committee.

The fifth, recommendation E, deals extensively with the important question of cooperation by the administering Powers, and makes a series of proposals regarding, in particular, the participation of these Powers in the work of the Committee, in visiting missions, in the provision of timely and up-to-date information as prescribed by article 73 e of the United Nations Charter, and in the participation of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of the Committee.

As members will note, the recommendations that we are proposing for their consideration deal mainly with principles, while setting out broad guidelines. Given the fast-changing world in which we are living nowadays, details will in many instances have to be worked out by the Committee or Subcommittees as they proceed with their work, depending on the prevailing circumstances at that moment.

The abundant and pertinent background documentation provided to the Working Group by the Secretariat has clearly shown that this review work has been a continuing process in the 30-year history of the Special Committee. I

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

trust, Mr. Chairman, that under your wise guidance this process will continue, and I hope that this report, which I am recommending for adoption by the Committee, will become an important part of it.

There are a number of editorial matters which I am referring to the Secretariat in order to ensure that the report is properly set out to reflect the views of the Working Group.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I would like, on behalf of all the members of the Committee, to express our gratitude to Ambassador Lohia for the very complete report he has submitted to us, and in particular for the work accomplished by him as Chairman of his Working Group, which has been able to provide us with very specific and full results in a relatively short time. I want to thank all Committee members that participated in the work of the Working Group.

I am informed by the Secretariat that the report, which has been provided to us provisionally, will be translated into all the working languages by Wednesday. In order not to delay the work of the Subcommittees and of the Special Committee as a whole, I would therefore ask members not to insist on having the official translations of the report at this stage.

Does any delegation wish to make a statement or a comment at this stage?

Mr. LEHNE (Norway): I would like to thank the Chairman of the Working Group of the Special Committee, Ambassador Lohia of Papua New Guinea, for his excellent work in producing the report before us, which contains recommendations to the Special Committee on improving the Committee's effectiveness. Our appreciation is extended to all the participants in the Working Group, who have contributed to the elaboration of the report and of the recommendations before us.

(Mr. Lehne, Norway)

My delegation is well satisfied with the way the Committee now seems to have solved the question of the merger of the two Subcommittees, and we are equally satisfied with the agreement on the proposal for one omnibus resolution for the small territories, which, it is to be hoped, will rationalize the work of our Committee without detracting from the importance of the specific needs and circumstances in the various territories.

The document before us represents a compromise; as a product of compromise, it does not fully reflect the expectations of my delegation in respect of the process of reform of the Special Committee. It falls short of our expectations with regard to the continued deliberation of the question of apartheid in the context of our Committee, and by reason of the fact that it was not possible to agree on a more constructive text on securing cooperation with the administering Powers and encouraging those Powers to cooperate with the Committee.

In the spirit of compromise, however, and in order to continue our efforts to work on the basis of consensus within our Committee, we are satisfied to endorse the recommendations contained in the report as a first step in the continuing efforts to improve the work of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): If no other delegation wishes to make a comment, in the absence of any objection I shall take it that we can adopt the report submitted to us by the Working Group and endorse the recommendations contained therein.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I wish once again to thank all members for the spirit of cooperation they displayed in the work of the Working Group and also right now in the adoption of this report, which will certainly facilitate the work of the Subcommittees and of the Committee in the weeks to come.

REQUESTS FOR HEARING

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I draw attention to Communication No. 2303, which has been distributed to members this morning in aide-mémoire 8/91. In that connection, I wish to inform members that the Subcommittee on Petitions, Information and Assistance, at its 486th meeting, held yesterday, considered that request for a hearing on the subject of Guam and decided to recommend to the Special Committee that the request should be granted.

In order to facilitate the work of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, which will be meeting on Tuesday, 28 May, and as the petitioner will be available that day, may I take it that the Committee grants the request for a hearing?

It was so decided.

COOPERATION WITH INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODIES

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): Before we adjourn, I should like to draw the attention of members to another important matter. As members know, the summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) will soon be held in Abuja, Nigeria. It is traditional for our Committee to be represented at these important African gatherings. On the basis of consultations, I propose that His Excellency Ambassador Renagi Renagi Lohia, Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea and Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance of this Committee, represent the Special Committee at the meeting of the Council of Ministers and at the summit of the Organization of African Unity. May I take it that the Committee is in agreement and that Ambassador Lohia will therefore represent us in his characteristically outstanding manner?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.